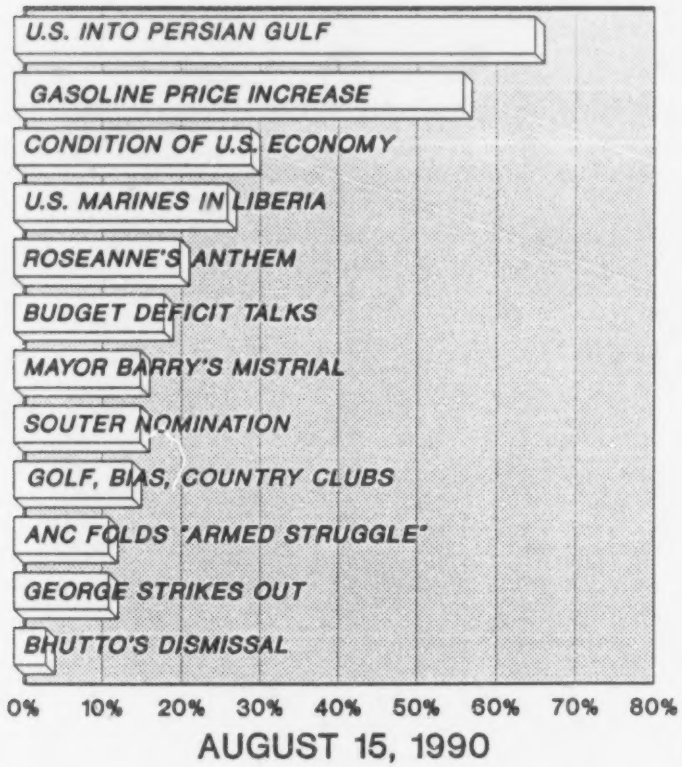
C8915-1

Times Mirror News Interest Index

Public Interest and Awareness of the News



AUGUST 15, 1990

Times Mirror Center
for The People & The Press

Times Mirror
Center for
The People &
The Press

NEWS

1875 Eye Street, N.W., Suite 1110
Washington, D.C. 20006
202 293-3126

FOR RELEASE: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 15, 1990

Times Mirror News Interest Index
August 1990

Public Interest and
Awareness of the News

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Donald S. Kellermann, Director
Andrew Kohut, Director of Surveys
Carol Bowman, Research Director
Times Mirror Center for The People & The Press
202/293-3126

AMERICAN PUBLIC RIVETED TO NEWS OF IRAQ AND SAUDI ARABIA

At week's end 66% of the American public said they were following news about the Iraqi invasion and the deployment of American forces to Saudi Arabia ***very closely***. Events in the Middle East now dominate public consciousness to an extraordinary degree. An unparalleled 85% of Times Mirror's nationwide telephone sample volunteered this, in an open-ended question, as the most important news event of the month.

This is a significantly higher level of interest than has been recorded for news about other actions involving U.S. armed forces or other major breaking international stories. For example, 60% followed news of the invasion of Panama ***very closely***, 58% U.S. air strikes against Libya and 50% the opening of the Berlin Wall. Never before has the Times Mirror News Interest Index recorded a single news story that has been seen as ***important*** by nearly so many Americans. The previous high watermark on this measure was 56% for the invasion of Panama in January.

Attentiveness to news about gasoline price hikes here at home has attracted nearly as much public interest as the military situation abroad. Fifty-seven percent of the public are following these stories very closely. News about gas price gouging is equally interesting to Americans in all parts of the country, in all age categories, to men and women, and blacks and whites.

The public is not only interested in the Mideast story, but is also reasonably well-informed about it. Two-thirds majorities know that the Soviet Union is supporting U.S. efforts to get Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait (66%) and that other countries will be sending forces to Saudi Arabia to defend against an Iraqi invasion of that oil-rich kingdom (64%).

If Saddam Hussein's army had not invaded Kuwait, news about the condition of the economy would have been the top story of the month. Fully 30% of the public said they were following very closely news about the condition of the economy over the past four weeks. This is an unusually large percentage of Americans to say they have been attentive to economic news. In May, just 18% said they were following very closely news about increasing interest rates and higher inflation.

Public interest in recent efforts by the Administration and Congress to cut the budget deficit was more consistent with past patterns of response. As was found in June, fewer than one in five (18%) said they followed very closely news about this subject.

There was also consistency in the size of the audience for news about the President's nomination of David Souter to the United States Supreme Court. Only sixteen percent said they followed the story very closely. The same number (17%) said they followed very closely news of the Bork nomination when that controversial appointment was dominating the headlines in the fall of 1987. Interest in news about Souter fails to reflect the intensity of interest usually related to stories about the abortion issue. It is of no greater relative interest to women or to young people.

The Marine landing in Liberia attracted the close attention of 27% of the public. Interest in this story showed no clear demographic pattern, except that blacks were somewhat more likely than whites to be interested (33%). This is striking because blacks are much less interested than whites in the situation in the Middle East (67% to 51%).

However, the biggest difference in news interest by race had to do with South Africa. ***Forty-seven percent*** of blacks said they followed very closely Mandela's announcement that the African National Congress (ANC) would end its armed struggle. In contrast, just ***8%*** of whites did so, resulting in a 12% overall rating for news of the ANC's historic change in policy.

Domestic stories with racial elements showed the same pattern. News of Mayor Barry's mistrial which broke during our interviewing period was followed very closely by 16% of the public on Saturday and Sunday night of this past weekend. However, among African-Americans, 30% followed news of the trial's outcome very closely, compared to 14% among whites.

This is the third measure of public interest in the Mayor's problems in the Times Mirror News Interest Index and the lowest level revealed yet. His arrest in February drew 28%, and his trial in July attracted 22%.

The controversy regarding the racial policies of country clubs that host major golf tournaments attracted a relatively small but racially skewed audience. Nationwide, 15% said they paid close attention to this news - among blacks that figure was 36% (vs 13% among whites).

Also in the world of professional sports, Major League Baseball's decision to compel George Steinbrenner to give up control of the Yankees attracted a meager national audience. Twelve percent said they followed the story very closely. Among men, and in the East, interest was predictably greater but still modest -- 19% and 20% respectively.

Roseanne Barr's controversial rendition of the national anthem attracted a larger audience (21%) than did Steinbrenner, because men and women showed equal interest in this story.

Americans, men and women alike, paid almost no attention to the dismissal of Pakistan's Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto. Four percent said they followed the story ***very*** closely and another 14% said they followed the news ***fairly*** closely.

The public gives the press better than average grades for its coverage of the Mideast situation, despite the fact that there have been few pictures of troops in Saudi Arabia or video accounts of the fighting in Kuwait. Thirty-six percent rated Mideast coverage as excellent. Typically, major national and international stories are given an excellent rating by less than a quarter of Times Mirror respondents.

When asked about information they would like to have regarding the Mideast situation, the public expresses the most interest in hearing more about how other countries are reacting to the situation (37%). Twenty-five percent reported they want to know more about how U.S. troops are being deployed, and another 25% are most interested in the effects of the crisis on gasoline prices and the economy. Only 8% want to know more about the historical background of the Middle East.

PERCENT FOLLOWING EACH NEWS STORY "VERY CLOSELY"

	Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait	Nomination of David Souter to U.S. Supreme Court	George Steinbrenner Decision	Recent Increase in Gasoline Prices	Dismissal of Pakistan's Prime Minister Bhutto	N
Total	66	16	12	57	4	(1213)
Sex						
Male	71	18	19	58	4	(608)
Female	60	14	6	55	4	(605)
Race						
White	67	17	12	57	4	(1024)
*Non-white	56	9	11	55	4	(182)
Black	51	9	11	56	3	(87)
Age						
Under 30	64	7	14	54	2	(265)
30-49	66	16	9	53	4	(488)
50+	67	22	14	62	5	(444)
Education						
College graduate	80	28	13	51	6	(331)
Other college	75	18	10	63	4	(317)
High school grad.	62	11	13	56	3	(402)
Less than h.s. grad.	45	9	12	55	2	(157)
Region						
East	66	20	20	54	2	(268)
Midwest	66	16	9	55	3	(313)
South	64	15	10	61	5	(380)
West	68	12	12	54	3	(252)

Question: Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely.

*Non-white include blacks

CONTINUED...

... CONTINUED

	Reports About U.S. Economy	Roseanne Barr/ National Anthem	The Budget Deficit	The ANC's Policy Change	U.S. Marines to Liberia	Country Club Contro-versy	Mayor Barry's Mistrial
Total	30	21	19	12	27	15	16
Sex							
Male	34	20	21	13	28	18	18
Female	27	21	16	12	26	12	13
Race							
White	30	21	19	8	26	13	14
*Non-white	32	18	16	33	33	25	26
Black	33	15	14	47	33	36	30
Age							
Under 30	19	19	8	15	24	14	13
30-49	28	16	15	10	27	15	17
50+	41	27	30	14	30	16	17
Education							
College graduate	40	19	25	12	26	22	25
Other college	31	19	20	13	31	13	13
High school grad.	27	21	14	13	27	13	13
Less than h.s. grad.	26	25	18	11	24	14	14
Region							
East	36	23	21	14	28	14	19
Midwest	24	18	18	13	28	11	12
South	35	22	20	13	28	19	19
West	26	21	16	8	24	14	12

Question: Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely.

**Non-white include blacks*

PRESS COVERAGE RATINGS OF NEWS STORIES

STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY

	Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait	Recent Increases in Gasoline Prices
Excellent	36	14
Good	50	38
Only Fair	10	30
Poor	2	16
Don't know	2	2
Sample Size	(901)	(86)
	100	100

PRESS PERFORMANCE

	MAY 1989	JUL 1989	AUG 1989	SEP 1989	OCT 1989	NOV 1989
Excellent	19	26	25	19	32	41
Good	43	42	45	50	45	41
Only Fair	24	21	21	22	18	13
Poor	10	10	8	7	3	3
Don't Know	4	1	1	2	2	2
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

	DEC 1989	JAN 1990	FEB 1990	MAR 1990	APR 1990	MAY 1990
Excellent	22	33	23	26	23	28
Good	45	48	50	48	54	49
Only Fair	25	14	19	20	16	17
Poor	6	3	5	4	4	5
Don't Know	2	2	3	2	3	1
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

	JUNE 1990	JULY 1990	AUG 1990
Excellent	25	21	30
Good	51	50	48
Only Fair	18	21	14
Poor	4	6	6
Don't Know	2	2	2
	100%	100%	100%

Question: In general, how would you rate the job the press has done in covering (STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY IN Q.3); excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among 1,213 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period of August 9-12, 1990. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

TIMES MIRROR NEWS INTEREST INDEX
AUGUST 1990
August 9-12, 1990
n = 1,213

INTERVIEWER NOTE: PLEASE FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE RESPONSE CATEGORIES

Q.1 What do you think is the most important news event that happened in the nation or in the world in the past 4 weeks? (DO NOT READ)

<u>International Stories</u>	
Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia	85
The dismissal of Pakistan's Prime Minister Bhutto by Pakistan's President	0
Political changes taking place in the Soviet Union	0
Political changes taking place in Eastern Europe	1
The pledge of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress to end the armed struggle in South Africa	0
The deployment of U.S. Marines to Liberia to protect the lives of Americans caught in the civil war	1
<u>Domestic Stories</u>	
The nomination of David Souter to the U.S. Supreme Court/Justice William Brennan's retirement	*
Major League baseball's decision to force George Steinbrenner to give up active control of the New York Yankees	0
Recent increase in the price of gasoline	2
Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy	*
The controversy surrounding the way Roseanne Barr sang the National Anthem at a San Diego Padres baseball game	*
Attempts by Congress and the Administration to find ways to reduce the budget deficit	0
Problems with the Hubble space telescope	0
The controversy over the exclusion of blacks from membership in many country clubs at which national golf championship matches are played	0
Washington DC Mayor Marion Barry's trial ending in a mistrial	0
OTHER SPECIFY ----------	4
Can't say/None	7
	100

Q.2 Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. (READ AND ROTATE LIST)

		Very Closely	Fairly Closely	Not Not too Closely	at all Closely	DK
a.	Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia	66	21	7	5	1=100
b.	The nomination of David Souter (PRONUNCIATION SUITOR) to the U.S. Supreme Court to replace Justice William Brennan	16	27	27	29	1=100
c.	Major League baseball's decision to force George Steinbrenner to give up active control of the New York Yankees	12	17	26	45	*=100
d.	Recent increase in the price of gasoline	57	27	10	5	1=100
e.	The dismissal of Pakistan's Prime Minister Bhutto (PRONUNCIATION BOO-toe) by Pakistan's President	4	14	30	52	*=100
f.	Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy	30	36	18	15	1=100
g.	The controversy surrounding the way Roseanne Barr sang the National Anthem at a San Diego Padres baseball game	21	23	27	28	1=100

CONTINUED...

		Very Closely	Fairly Closely	Not Not too Closely	at all Closely	DK
h.	Attempts by Congress and the Administration to find ways to reduce the budget deficit	19	30	27	23	1=100
i.	The pledge of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress to end the armed struggle in South Africa	12	27	30	30	1=100
j.	The deployment of U.S. Marines to Liberia to protect the lives of Americans caught in the civil war	27	32	23	17	1=100
k.	The controversy over the exclusion of blacks from membership in many country clubs at which national golf championship matches are played	15	23	24	37	1=100
*l.	Washington DC Mayor Marion Barry's trial ending in a mistrial	16	33	26	24	1=100

*Interviews were conducted Saturday and Sunday (August 11-12, 1990) among 394 respondents.

Q.3 Which one of the stories I just mentioned, have you followed most closely? (DO NOT READ LIST. ACCEPT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.)

		Story Followed Most Closely
a.	Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia	72
b.	The nomination of David Souter to the U.S. Supreme Court to replace Justice William Brennan	1
c.	Major League baseball's decision to force George Steinbrenner to give up active control of the New York Yankees	2
d.	Recent increase in the price of gasoline	8
e.	The dismissal of Pakistan's Prime Minister Bhutto by Pakistan's President	*
f.	Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy	3
g.	The controversy surrounding the way Roseanne Barr sang the National Anthem at a San Diego Padres baseball game	3
h.	Attempts by Congress and the Administration to find ways to reduce the budget deficit	1
i.	The pledge of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress to end the armed struggle in South Africa	2
j.	The deployment of U.S. Marines to Liberia to protect the lives of Americans caught in the civil war	1
k.	The controversy over the exclusion of blacks from membership in many country clubs at which national golf championship matches are played	1
l.	Washington DC Mayor Marion Barry's trial ending in a mistrial	1
	CAN'T SAY	5
		100

IF RESPONDENT SAID '99' CAN'T SAY IN Q.3, SKIP TO Q.5

Q.4 In general, how would you rate the job the press has done in covering (STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY IN Q.3); excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

		STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY	
		Iraq's Invasion of Kuwait	Recent Increase in Gasoline Prices
30	Excellent	36	14
48	Good	50	38
14	Only Fair	10	30
6	Poor	2	16
2	Don't know	2	2
100		100	100

Q.5 Is it your impression that the Soviet Union is supporting our efforts to get Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait or is the Soviet Union opposing our efforts to get Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait?

66	Supporting
15	Opposing
19	Don't know
100	

Q.6 Is it your impression the other countries will be sending armed forces to Saudi Arabia or is it your impression that only U.S. forces are being sent?

64	Other countries will be sending armed forces
30	Only U.S.
6	Don't know
100	

Q.7 Which one of the following aspects of the situation in the Mideast would you most like to know more about?

25	How U.S. armed forces are being deployed
37	How other countries are reacting to the situation
25	What effects this situation will have on gasoline prices and the economy
8	The historical background of the Mideast
2	None (VOLUNTEERED)
3	Don't know
100	

TIMES MIRROR DATABASE
PUBLIC ATTENTIVENESS TO MAJOR NEWS STORIES
(1986 - 1990)

PERCENT FOLLOWED
VERY CLOSELY

80 Explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger (July 86)

73 Destruction caused by the San Francisco earthquake (Nov 89)

69 Little girl in Texas who was rescued after falling into a well (Oct 87)
66 **IRAQ'S INVASION OF KUWAIT AND THE DEPLOYMENT OF U.S. FORCES TO SAUDI ARABIA (AUG 90)**
60 Invasion of Panama (Jan 90)
60 Destruction caused by Hurricane Hugo (Oct 89)

58 U.S. air strikes against Libya (July 86)
57 **RECENT INCREASE IN THE PRICE OF GASOLINE (AUG 90)**
53 Crash of a United Airlines DC-10 in Sioux City, Iowa (Aug 89)
52 Alaska Oil Spill (May 89)
51 Supreme Court decision of flag burning (July 89)
50 Opening of the Berlin Wall between East and West Germany (Nov 89)
50 Flight of the space shuttle (Oct 88)

49 Murder of Marine Lt. Col. Higgins in Lebanon, and negotiations to free the other hostages in the mideast (Aug 89)
49 Drought and its effects on American farmers (Aug 88)
48 TWA hostage crisis that took place last summer in Beirut, Lebanon (July 86)
47 Political upheaval in China (July 89)
47 Supreme Court decision on abortion (July 89)
46 Nuclear accident at Chernobyl in the Soviet Union (July 86)
46 The freeing of two Americans who had been held hostage in the Mideast (May 90)
43 News about the presidential campaign in 1988 (Oct 88)
42 Hot weather this summer and the greenhouse effect (Aug 88)
42 Downing of an Iranian passenger plane by a U.S. Navy ship (Aug 88)
40 Bush administration's plan to deal with this country's drug problem (Sept 89)
40 The stock market crash (Oct 87)

39 News about the presidential campaign in 1988 (Aug 88)
38 Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to the U.S. for a Summit meeting (June 90)
38 Drug use and efforts to combat it (Jan 90)
38 U.S. Navy escort of Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf (Sept 87)
37 U.S. Navy escort of Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf (Oct 87)
37 Stories about Dan Quayle, the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate (Aug 88)
37 Sentencing of Oliver North (July 89)

PERCENT FOLLOWED VERY CLOSELY

35 Attempts to change the abortion laws (Dec 89)
35 Hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise ship in the Mediterranean (July 86)
35 Explosion and fire on the U.S. Battleship Iowa (May 89)
34 Reports about flooding in Texas and other southwestern states (June 90)
34 The war between the Colombian government and the major drug traffickers (Sept 89)
33 Crash of the Colombian airliner near Kennedy airport in New York (Feb 90)
33 Congressional hearings about the Iran-Contra affair (Sept 87)
33 Guilty verdict in the trial of televangelist Jim Bakker (Oct 89)
31 The celebration of Earth Day (May 90)
31 The World Series (Oct 88)
31 Flight of East German refugees to West Germany (Oct 89)
31 Oliver North trial (May 89)
30 **REPORTS ABOUT THE CONDITION OF THE U.S. ECONOMY (AUG 90)**
30 Freeing of jailed black South African leader Nelson Mandela (March 90)
30 Banishment of Pete Rose from baseball for life (Sept 89)
30 The Democratic convention (Aug 88)
30 President Bush's call for higher taxes to help reduce the federal deficit (July 90)

29 Reports about the fires in Southern California (July 90)
29 Lithuania's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union and Moscow's response (April 90)
29 Suicide in Boston of Charles Stuart who murdered his pregnant wife and blamed it on a black man (Feb 90)
29 Political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany (Jan 90)
29 Political changes in East Germany and the flight of refugees to West Germany (Nov 89)
29 Attack and sexual assault on a female jogger in Central Park, New York, by a group of youths (May 89)
29 Failed coup attempt against Panamanian strongman Noriega (Oct 89)
28 The death of 87 people in a fire at a social club in the Bronx, New York (April 90)
28 Political changes taking place in the Soviet Union (March 90)
28 Arrest of Washington's Mayor Barry on drug use charges (Feb 90)
28 The revolution in Romania (Jan 90)
28 Political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany (Dec 89)
28 Problems at nuclear reactor plants (Oct 88)
28 The end of Gary Hart's candidacy and the Donna Rice allegations (Sept 87)
27 **THE DEPLOYMENT OF U.S. MARINES TO LIBERIA TO PROTECT THE LIVES OF AMERICANS CAUGHT IN THE CIVIL WAR (AUG 90)**
27 Lithuania's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union and Moscow's response (May 90)
27 Acquittal of the owners of the McMartin Day Care Center in California who were charged with sexually abusing children (Feb 90)
27 The NFL playoffs (Jan 90)
27 The Republican convention (Aug 88)

PERCENT FOLLOWED
VERY CLOSELY

26 The death of Hank Gathers, a college basketball player, during a game (April 90)
26 Political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany (Feb 90)
26 Passage in Congress of a bill to bail out ailing savings and loan institutions (Aug 89)
25 Supreme Court's hearing of arguments in a Missouri abortion case (May 89)
24 Supreme Court decision that found laws against flag burning unconstitutional and the attempt in congress to amend the Constitution (July 90)
24 Nelson Mandela's visit to the U.S. (July 90)
24 The deployment of the Hubble Space Telescope (May 90)
24 The difficulties the government is having in getting people to fill out Census forms (May 90)
24 The NCAA Basketball playoffs (April 90)
24 Supreme Court decision regarding a person's right to die (July 90)
23 The attempt in Idaho to pass a bill that would severely restrict abortions (April 90)
23 The Greyhound bus drivers' strike (April 90)
23 Discussion of the reunification of Germany (March 90)
23 The World Series (Nov 89)
22 Washington Mayor Barry's trial (July 90)
22 The 54 year old Oregon woman suffering from Alzheimers who ended her life by using a suicide machine (July 90)
22 President Bush's visit to Colombia to attend a drug summit (March 90)
22 The Super Bowl (Feb 90)
22 Letter bombings of federal judges (Jan 90)
22 Discoveries made by the spacecraft Voyager 2 (Sept 89)
22 Trial of televangelist Jim Bakker (Sept 89)
22 April hijacking of a Kuwaiti airplane by Shiite Moslems (May 88)
22 Cease fire in the war between Iran and Iraq (Aug 88)
22 News about the presidential campaign in 1988 (May 88)
22 Charges that Pete Rose has bet on baseball games (July 89)
21 THE CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE WAY ROSEANNE BARR SANG THE NATIONAL ANTHEM AT A SAN DIEGO PADRES BASEBALL GAME (AUG 90)
21 Tensions between Moscow and the Baltic Republics of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania who wish to secede from the Soviet Union (June 90)
21 Discussions about German reunification (April 90)
21 Political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, East Germany and other countries of Eastern and Central Europe (March 90)
21 The scandal involving HUD (Aug 89)
20 The earthquake in Iran (July 90)
20 The Gorbachev/Bush summit (Dec 89)
20 Attempts by the U.S. government to depose General Noriega in Panama (May 88)
20 Post-season baseball playoffs (Oct 89)

19 ATTEMPTS BY CONGRESS AND THE ADMINISTRATION TO FIND WAYS TO REDUCE THE BUDGET DEFICIT (AUG 90)
19 Elections in Nicaragua (March 90)
19 Coup attempt against the Filipino government (Dec 89)
19 Attempts in Congress to repeal the new catastrophic health insurance plan (Oct 89)
19 Incidents of racial violence in New York City and Virginia Beach (Sept 89)
19 Discussions of a U.S. Soviet arms agreement (Sept 87)

PERCENT FOLLOWED
VERY CLOSELY

18 Special meetings between the Bush Administration and Congressional Leaders to find ways to reduce the federal deficit (June 90)
18 Continuing news about the Savings and Loan scandal (June 90)
18 Reports about renewed inflation and rising interest rates (May 90)
18 Senator Moynihan's proposal to cut social security taxes (Feb 90)
18 The stock market crash (May 88)
18 Conflict in the Middle East between Palestinians and the Israelis in the occupied territories (May 88)
17 Racial tension in New York City resulting from the Bensonhurst trial verdict and the black boycott of Korean grocers (June 90)
17 Discussions between the American and Japanese governments about trade issues (April 90)
17 A custody case involving a mother who went to jail and a little child taken to New Zealand by her grandparents (March 90)
17 Nomination of Robert Bork to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court (Sept 87)
16 THE NOMINATION OF DAVID SOUTER TO THE U.S. SUPREME COURT TO REPLACE JUSTICE WILLIAM BRENNAN (AUG 90)
16 WASHINGTON DC MAYOR MARION BARRY'S TRIAL ENDING IN A MISTRIAL (AUG 90)
16 The financial troubles of Donald Trump (July 90)
16 Dispute between the President and Congress over allowing Chinese students to remain in America (Feb 90)
15 THE CONTROVERSY OVER THE EXCLUSION OF BLACKS FROM MEMBERSHIP IN MANY COUNTRY CLUBS AT WHICH NATIONAL GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP MATCHES ARE PLAYED (AUG 90)
15 Education Summit held by Bush and the nation's Governors (Oct 89)
15 Ethics committee's investigation of Speaker of the House Jim Wright (May 89)
15 News about the Democratic candidates for the presidential nomination (Oct 87)
15 Conflict of interest allegations about Attorney General Ed Meese (May 88)
15 The scandal involving HUD (July 89)
14 Renewed fighting between government and the rebels in El Salvador (Dec 89)
14 House approval of a cut in the capital gains tax (Oct 89)
14 Spy scandal involving a U.S. Diplomat in Vienna (Aug 89)
14 Coverage of Democratic and Republican candidates for the Presidential nomination (Sept 87)
14 Pending divorce between Mike Tyson and Robin Givens (Oct 88)
13 Civil unrest and ethnic violence in Soviet Azerbaijan (Feb 90)
13 Resumption of fighting in Nicaragua between the Contras and government forces (Nov 89)
13 Elections in Virginia, New Jersey, New York City and other localities (Nov 89)
13 News about the Republican candidates for the Presidential nomination (Oct 88)
12 MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL'S DECISION TO FORCE GEORGE STEINBRENNER TO GIVE UP ACTIVE CONTROL OF THE NEW YORK YANKEES (AUG 90)
12 THE PLEDGE OF NELSON MANDELA'S AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS TO END THE ARMED STRUGGLE IN SOUTH AFRICA (AUG 90)
12 Marital breakup of Donald and Ivana Trump (March 90)
12 Solidarity's role in governing Poland (July 89)
11 The incident in Gaza in which a deranged Israeli killed seven Palestinians and the West bank riots that followed (June 90)
11 Legalization of banned black opposition groups in South Africa and the promise to free Nelson Mandela (Feb 90)

PERCENT FOLLOWED
VERY CLOSELY

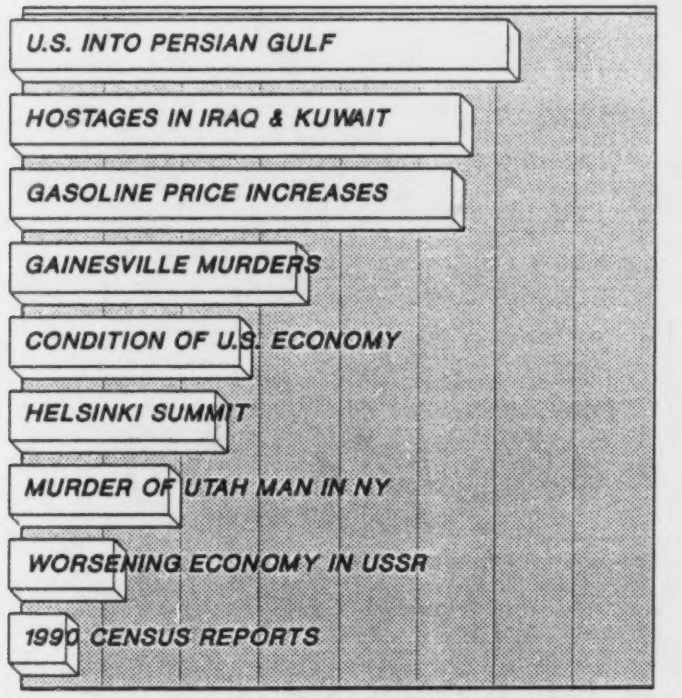
10 Japanese purchase of Rockefeller center in New York City (Dec 89)
10 The spending and tax proposals made by Congressman Dan Rostenkowski to help reduce the budget deficit (April 90)
10 The Academy Awards (April 90)

9 The Aids conference in San Francisco (July 90)
9 May day protests in Moscow (May 90)
9 Bankruptcy of Drexel Burnham Lambert inc. (March 90)
9 Trial of Hotel owner Leona Helmsley for tax evasion (Sept 89)
9 Stories about the 20th anniversary of the Woodstock Music Festival (Aug 89)
6 Elections in Romania (June 90)
6 The visit to the United States of Vaclav Havel, the new president of Czechoslovakia (March 90)
6 Trip of high ranking officials to China (Jan 90)
6 The scandal involving the Japanese Prime Minister and other high ranking officials (May 89)
6 The scandal involving Congressman Barney Frank and a male prostitute (Oct 89)
4 THE DISMISSAL OF PAKISTAN'S PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO BY PAKISTAN'S PRESIDENT (AUG 90)
4 The civil war in Cambodia (May 90)
2 Tom Cruise's separation from his wife (April 90)

C8915-1

Times Mirror News Interest Index

Public Interest and Awareness of the News



SEPTEMBER 14, 1990

Times Mirror Center
for The People & The Press

Times Mirror
Center for
The People &
The Press

1875 Eye Street, N.W., Suite 1110
Washington, D.C. 20006
202 293-3126

FOR RELEASE: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1990

Times Mirror News Interest Index
September 1990

Public Interest and
Awareness of the News

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Donald S. Kellermann, Director
Andrew Kohut, Director of Surveys
Carol Bowman, Research Director
Times Mirror Center for The People & The Press
202/293-3126

PUBLIC INTEREST IN GULF CRISIS UNABATED

Americans remain as attentive as they were a month ago to events in the Persian Gulf. Sixty-three percent of the public are following news about the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. forces to the Persian Gulf very closely. Our August survey showed an only marginally higher level of interest in Gulf crisis news (66%).

Interest in the main Mideast story is accompanied by a sustained interest in the secondary stories. Fifty-six percent of Americans are following very closely news about rising gasoline prices here at home, compared to 57% a month ago. News about the plight of hostages attracted nearly as many Americans as the principal story. Fifty-seven percent said they have followed very closely news about the Americans and other Westerners detained in Iraq and Kuwait.

The only aspect of this story to garner little public interest was the Helsinki summit which drew the close attention of only one in four Americans (26%). This is much less interest than was the case when Bush and Gorbachev met in Washington in June. At that time 38% said they followed summit news very closely.

Despite the continuing high level of attention paid to the overall Persian Gulf story, there is some evidence of public fatigue with the ***amount*** of Gulf coverage. As many as 15% of respondents volunteered that there was too much news about the crisis. This is more a measure of discontent with media "overkill" than with a lack of interest in the story itself. Complaints about the amount of coverage were as likely to come from people who are following the story very closely as they were from people who are less attentive to the crisis.

The Gainesville murders was the non-Gulf story that drew the most public attention in the past four weeks. Thirty-six percent of the public said they followed news of these serial killings very closely. This is an unusually high level of public interest for a local crime story. It drew significantly more public attention than other well publicized stories, such as the Stuart case (29%), the attack and sexual assault of the Central park jogger (29%) and the arson in a Bronx social club that killed 38 people.

It also attracted much more public attention this month than did the Watkins murder in New York city. Just one in five (20%) said they followed very closely news about this New York city subway murder. Blacks and older people were more interested than whites and younger people in both the Watkins murder and in the Gainesville killings.

Interest in the reports about the U.S. economy remained at the high level recorded a month ago. Twenty-nine percent said they were following news about the condition of the U.S. economy very closely, compared to 30% a month ago.

Interest in the worsening conditions of the Soviet economy generated little interest among Americans. Only 13% of the Times Mirror sample said they were following accounts of growing economic problems in the Soviet Union very closely. However, first reports of the U.S. Census drew an even smaller audience, with only 7% saying they were highly attentive to these stories. It is of note that the Census story drew more than twice as much interest among blacks than it did among whites (15% vs. 6%).

Opinion About Gulf Coverage

Americans continue to give the press high marks overall for their coverage of the Mideast. Thirty-nine percent rated the coverage as excellent which is higher than the News Interest Index average rating, but not significantly higher than was obtained for this story last month.

Americans back up their generally positive opinion of Gulf coverage with the view that the press has been fair in the way it has treated the story. About two-thirds of the Times Mirror sample expressed that opinion (68%). Very small minorities of the public see the press as either overly critical (10%) or too supportive of American policies in the Gulf (11%).

While the public feels the press has been objective in what it has covered, a plurality feels that the views of Americans who oppose the buildup have not received enough of an airing. Forty percent expressed that opinion, compared to 15% who think that critics of American policies have gotten too much coverage and 35% who think they have received the right amount of coverage.

Divisions of opinion on this subject are especially sharp by demographic groups. Majorities of blacks (52%) and Americans under 30 years of age (55%) feel that dissenting voices have not been sufficiently heard from, while whites (38%) and older people (29%) are far less likely to feel this way. As might be expected, people who take a more dovish position on the Persian Gulf policy are also more apt to think that dissenting voices have not been sufficiently heard (52%).

CNN gets the most mentions from Americans (27%) as the news network doing the best job of covering the crisis in the Gulf. ABC (21%) is in second place. CBS and NBC were named by significantly fewer than cited the other two networks (14% and 13%, respectively).

It should be underscored that CNN gets top honors from the general public despite the fact that this national sample includes both cable and ***non-cable*** areas.

With regard to "exclusives and firsts", 20% recalled that Dan Rather of CBS got the exclusive interview with Saddam Hussein, while only 5% could recall that Ted Koppel was the first American correspondent to broadcast from Baghdad after the invasion of Kuwait. "Exclusives and firsts" may not affect viewer response as much as

some may believe. CNN received the best overall marks for Gulf coverage even among those who knew of Rather and Koppel's achievements.

Saddam Hussein's television meetings with hostages were widely seen by the American public, but their intended effects appear to have backfired. Among the 52% who say they saw the coverage, a 70% majority said the videos made them more likely, not less likely, to favor military action against the Iraqis.

The Public Interest, and Perceptions As they Relate to Policy Views

Most Americans believe our armed forces were sent to the Gulf to defend the oil supply, not to protect the independence of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Fifty-five percent come to that conclusion based on what they have seen or read, while only 25% feel U.S. forces in the Gulf are there mainly to protect the independence of Gulf countries. Thirteen percent said that both objectives were equally important.

People who believe that U.S. forces are mainly protecting the independence of the Gulf states are much more likely than others to believe that the U.S. should use military force against the Iraqis if the embargo does not succeed (72% vs. 61%).

There is also a correlation between the degree of a person's interest in the news about the Gulf and feelings about the use of force to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait. Seventy percent of those who are following Gulf news very closely favor the use of force compared to 53% among those who are paying less attention to the story.

Americans who are following the crisis very closely give George Bush a higher than average approval rating (75%). In that connection, Bush's rating at 68% is significantly below what it was in mid-August (76%).

PERCENT FOLLOWING EACH NEWS STORY "VERY CLOSELY"

	Iraq's Occupation of Kuwait	American Hostages and Westerners detained in Iraq and Kuwait	Bush/ Gorbachev Summit Meeting	Serial Killer in Gainesville Florida	Increase in Gas Prices	N
Total	63	57	26	36	56	(1244)
Sex						
Male	69	58	25	32	60	(627)
Female	57	56	26	41	51	(617)
Race						
White	64	56	26	35	54	(1055)
*Non-white	55	56	22	45	64	(179)
Black	52	57	19	50	64	(112)
Age						
Under 30	57	49	15	33	55	(272)
30-49	70	60	25	32	54	(531)
50+	59	58	33	43	57	(429)
Education						
College graduate	77	62	29	31	45	(352)
Other college	70	59	24	43	59	(327)
High school grad.	60	57	26	35	60	(407)
Less than h.s. grad.	46	46	25	37	56	(144)
Region						
East	65	57	29	38	55	(313)
Midwest	60	54	23	34	58	(308)
South	62	58	26	44	58	(370)
West	63	56	26	25	49	(250)
Party ID						
Republican	69	63	27	36	54	(395)
Democrat	62	58	27	41	59	(400)
Independent	61	52	25	33	54	(368)

Question: Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely.

*Non-white include blacks

CONTINUED...

... CONTINUED

	Murder of a Utah Man in New York City	Reports About U.S. Economy	First Reports From the 1990 U.S. Census	Worsening Economic Conditions in the Soviet Union
Total	20	29	7	13
Sex				
Male	20	32	7	12
Female	20	26	8	12
Race				
White	19	28	6	12
*Non-white	23	31	14	13
Black	25	31	14	12
Age				
Under 30	16	17	3	6
30-49	15	30	7	11
50+	28	35	11	18
Education				
College graduate	21	30	9	15
Other college	20	32	6	12
High school grad.	17	28	5	9
Less than h.s. grad.	23	26	12	16
Region				
East	32	32	8	13
Midwest	12	27	8	10
South	19	30	8	14
West	16	24	5	12
Party ID				
Republican	18	30	5	14
Democrat	22	30	10	12
Independent	20	28	6	11

Question: Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely.

**Non-white include blacks*

PRESS COVERAGE RATINGS OF NEWS STORIES

STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY

	Iraq's Occupation of Kuwait	Serial Killer in Gainesville Florida
Excellent	39	24
Good	47	42
Only Fair	9	22
Poor	3	7
Don't know	2	5
	100	100

PRESS PERFORMANCE

	MAY 1989	JUL 1989	AUG 1989	SEP 1989	OCT 1989	NOV 1989
Excellent	19	26	25	19	32	41
Good	43	42	45	50	45	41
Only Fair	24	21	21	22	18	13
Poor	10	10	8	7	3	3
Don't Know	4	1	1	2	2	2
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

	DEC 1989	JAN 1990	FEB 1990	MAR 1990	APR 1990	MAY 1990
Excellent	22	33	23	26	23	28
Good	45	48	50	48	54	49
Only Fair	25	14	19	20	16	17
Poor	6	3	5	4	4	5
Don't Know	2	2	3	2	3	1
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

	JUNE 1990	JULY 1990	AUG 1990	SEPT 1990
Excellent	25	21	30	33
Good	51	50	48	46
Only Fair	18	21	14	13
Poor	4	6	6	5
Don't Know	2	2	2	3
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Question: In general, how would you rate the job the press has done in covering (STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY IN Q.7); excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among 1,244 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period of September 10-12, 1990. Interviewing services were provided by The Gallup Organization in Lincoln, Nebraska. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

TIMES MIRROR NEWS INTEREST INDEX
SEPTEMBER 1990
September 10-12, 1990
n=1,244

Q.1 Do you happen to read any daily newspaper or newspapers regularly?

69	Yes
31	No
*	Don't know
100	

Q.2 Do you happen to watch any TV news programs regularly, or not?

79	Yes
21	No
*	Don't know
100	

Q.3 Do you listen to the news on the radio regularly or not?

51	Yes
49	No
*	Don't know
100	

Q.4 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George Bush is handling his job as President?

68	Approve
15	Disapprove
17	Don't know
100	

INTERVIEWER NOTE: PLEASE FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE RESPONSE CATEGORIES

Q.5 What do you think is the most important news event that happened in the nation or in the world in the past 4 weeks? **(DO NOT READ)**

<u>International Stories</u>	
Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. forces to the Persian Gulf/General mentions of the Gulf crisis	81
The plight of American hostages and other Westerners detained in Iraq and Kuwait	3
Political changes taking place in the Soviet Union	*
Political changes taking place in Eastern Europe	*
The Bush/Gorbachev summit meeting in Helsinki	2
Worsening economic conditions in the Soviet Union	*
<u>Domestic Stories</u>	
The nomination of David Souter to the U.S. Supreme Court/Justice William Brennan's retirement	0
The murder of five people by a serial killer around the University of Florida campus in Gainesville	1
Recent increase in the price of gasoline	1
The murder on a New York subway platform of a Utah man attempting to protect his parents from attack by teenage muggers	*
Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy	*
First reports from the 1990 U.S. Census/changes in population around the country	0
Attempts by Congress and the Administration to find ways to reduce the budget deficit	*
OTHER (SPECIFY)	4
DON'T KNOW	7
REFUSED	*
NONE	1
	100

Q.6 Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. (READ AND ROTATE LIST)

		Very Closely	Fairly Closely	Not too Closely	Not at all Closely	DK
a.	Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. forces to the Persian Gulf	63	26	7	4	*=100
b.	The plight of American hostages and other Westerners detained in Iraq and Kuwait	57	30	9	3	1=100
c.	The Bush/Gorbachev summit meeting in Helsinki	26	31	25	17	1=100
d.	The murder of five people by a serial killer around the University of Florida campus in Gainesville	36	35	19	10	*=100
e.	Recent increases in the price of gasoline	56	28	11	5	*=100
f.	The murder on a New York subway platform of a Utah man attempting to protect his parents from attack by teenage muggers	20	23	19	36	2=100
g.	Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy	29	38	19	13	1=100
h.	First reports from the 1990 U.S. Census	7	21	29	42	1=100
i.	Worsening economic conditions in the Soviet Union	13	31	30	25	1=100

Q.7 Which <u>one</u> of the stories I just mentioned, have you followed most closely? **(DO NOT READ LIST. ACCEPT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.)**

		Story Followed Most Closely
a.	Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. forces to the Persian Gulf	62
b.	The plight of American hostages and other Westerners detained in Iraq and Kuwait	7
c.	The murder of five people by a serial killer around the University of Florida campus in Gainesville	10
d.	The Bush/Gorbachev summit meeting in Helsinki	2
e.	Recent increases in the price of gasoline	7
f.	The murder on a New York subway platform of a Utah man attempting to protect his parents from attack by teenage muggers	3
g.	Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy	2
h.	First reports from the 1990 U.S. Census	*
i.	Worsening economic conditions in the Soviet Union	1
	CAN'T SAY	6
		100

Q.8 Of all the stories mentioned, which of them, if any, received too much coverage? (DO NOT READ LIST, ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES, BE SURE TO PROMPT FOR "ANY OTHERS")

		Received Too Much Coverage
a.	Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. forces to the Persian Gulf	15
b.	The plight of American hostages and other Westerners detained in Iraq and Kuwait	3
c.	The murder of five people by a serial killer around the University of Florida campus in Gainesville	5
d.	The Bush/Gorbachev summit meeting in Helsinki	4
e.	Recent increases in the price of gasoline	3
f.	The murder on a New York subway platform of a Utah man attempting to protect his parents from attack by teenage muggers	2
g.	Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy	*
h.	First reports from the 1990 U.S. Census	1
i.	Worsening economic conditions in the Soviet Union	1
	None	45
	CAN'T SAY	21

IF RESPONDENT SAID '99' CAN'T SAY IN Q.7, SKIP TO Q.10

Q.9 In general, how would you rate the job the press has done in covering **(STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY IN Q.7)**; excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

		STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY:	
		Iraq's Occupation of Kuwait	Serial Killer in Gainesville Florida
33	Excellent	39	24
46	Good	47	42
13	Only Fair	9	22
5	Poor	3	7
3	Don't know	2	5
100		100	100
	Sample Size	(800)	(114)

Q.10 Did you happen to see any of the televised meetings between Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and Western hostages?

52	Yes - GO TO Q.11	
47	No	GO TO Q.12
1	Don't know	GO TO Q.12
100		

Q.11 As a result of seeing this, did it make you more likely to support military action against the Iraqis, or less likely to support military action against the Iraqis?

70	More likely
10	Less likely
11	Same (VOLUNTEERED)
9	Don't know
100	

Q.12 In your opinion, which TV network is doing the best job of covering the crisis in the Gulf - ABC, CBS, NBC or CNN?

21	ABC
14	CBS
13	NBC
27	CNN
25	Don't know
100	

Q.13 Can you recall which television network it was that got an exclusive interview with Saddam Hussein? DO NOT READ

20	CBS, Dan Rather
17	All other answers
59	No, can't recall
4	Don't know
100	

Q.14 Can you recall the name of the first TV correspondent to broadcast from Baghdad in the early days of the crisis? DO NOT READ

5	Ted Koppel
24	All other answers
68	No, can't recall
3	Don't know
100	

Q.15 Do you happen to know if the U.S. was a major provider of arms to either Iraq or Iran during their seven year war? (IF YES, Which country?)

27	Yes, Iraq
14	Yes, Iran
48	No
11	Don't know
100	

Q.16 How do you feel about news coverage of the crisis in the Gulf - overall are news organizations being too critical of U.S. policy, not critical enough of U.S. policy, or are they reporting it fairly?

10	Too critical
11	Not critical enough
68	Reporting it fairly
7	Can't say
4	Don't know
100	

Q.17 Have you heard too much, too little, or the right amount about the views of Americans who oppose sending U.S. forces to the Gulf?

15	Too much
40	Too little
35	Right amount
10	Don't know
100	

Q.18 From what you have heard or read, what is the main reason for sending U.S. forces in the Gulf - to defend the independence of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries from Iraqi attack or to prevent Saddam Hussein from taking over the oil supplies in the region?

25	Defend independence
55	Protect oil supply
13	Both (VOLUNTEERED)
7	Don't know
100	

Q.19 If the economic blockade does not succeed in getting Iraq to pull its forces out of Kuwait, would you favor or oppose military action against Iraq?

63	Favor
24	Oppose
13	Don't know
100	

TIMES MIRROR DATABASE
PUBLIC ATTENTIVENESS TO MAJOR NEWS STORIES
(1986 - 1990)

PERCENT FOLLOWED
VERY CLOSELY

80 Explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger (July 86)

73 Destruction caused by the San Francisco earthquake (Nov 89)

69 Little girl in Texas who was rescued after falling into a well (Oct 87)
68 Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia (Aug 90)
63 IRAQ'S OCCUPATION OF KUWAIT AND THE DEPLOYMENT OF U.S. FORCES TO THE PERSIAN GULF (SEPT 90)
60 Invasion of Panama (Jan 90)
60 Destruction caused by Hurricane Hugo (Oct 89)

58 U.S. air strikes against Libya (July 86)
57 THE PLIGHT OF THE AMERICAN HOSTAGES AND OTHER WESTERNERS DETAINED IN IRAQ (SEPT 90)
57 Recent increase in the price of gasoline (Aug 90)
56 RECENT INCREASES IN THE PRICE OF GASOLINE (SEPT 90)
53 Crash of a United Airlines DC-10 in Sioux City, Iowa (Aug 89)
52 Alaska Oil Spill (May 89)
51 Supreme Court decision of flag burning (July 89)
50 Opening of the Berlin Wall between East and West Germany (Nov 89)
50 Flight of the space shuttle (Oct 88)

49 Murder of Marine Lt. Col. Higgins in Lebanon, and negotiations to free the other hostages in the Mideast (Aug 89)
49 Drought and its effects on American farmers (Aug 88)
48 TWA hostage crisis that took place last summer in Beirut, Lebanon (July 86)
47 Political upheaval in China (July 89)
47 Supreme Court decision on abortion (July 89)
46 Nuclear accident at Chernobyl in the Soviet Union (July 86)
46 Freeing of two Americans who had been held hostage in the Mideast (May 90)
43 News about the presidential campaign in 1988 (Oct 88)
42 Hot weather this summer and the greenhouse effect (Aug 88)
42 Downing of an Iranian passenger plane by a U.S. Navy ship (Aug 88)
40 Bush administration's plan to deal with this country's drug problem (Sept 89)
40 The stock market crash (Oct 87)

39 News about the presidential campaign in 1988 (Aug 88)
38 Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to the U.S. for a Summit meeting (June 90)
38 Drug use and efforts to combat it (Jan 90)
38 U.S. Navy escort of Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf (Sept 87)
37 U.S. Navy escort of Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf (Oct 87)

PERCENT FOLLOWED
VERY CLOSELY

37 Stories about Dan Quayle, the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate (Aug 88)
37 Sentencing of Oliver North (July 89)
36 THE MURDER OF FIVE PEOPLE BY A SERIAL KILLER AROUND THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA CAMPUS IN GAINESVILLE (SEPT 90)
35 Attempts to change the abortion laws (Dec 89)
35 Hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise ship in the Mediterranean (July 86)
35 Explosion and fire on the U.S. Battleship Iowa (May 89)
34 Reports about flooding in Texas and other southwestern states (June 90)
34 The war between the Colombian government and the major drug traffickers (Sept 89)
33 Crash of the Colombian airliner near Kennedy airport in New York (Feb 90)
33 Congressional hearings about the Iran-Contra affair (Sept 87)
33 Guilty verdict in the trial of televangelist Jim Bakker (Oct 89)
31 Celebration of Earth Day (May 90)
31 The World Series (Oct 88)
31 Flight of East German refugees to West Germany (Oct 89)
31 Oliver North trial (May 89)
30 Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy (Aug 90)
30 Freeing of jailed black South African leader Nelson Mandela (March 90)
30 Banishment of Pete Rose from baseball for life (Sept 89)
30 The Democratic convention (Aug 88)
30 President Bush's call for higher taxes to help reduce the federal deficit (July 90)

29 REPORTS ABOUT THE CONDITION OF THE U.S. ECONOMY (SEPT 90)
29 Reports about the fires in Southern California (July 90)
29 Lithuania's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union and Moscow's response (April 90)
29 Suicide in Boston of Charles Stuart who murdered his pregnant wife and blamed it on a black man (Feb 90)
29 Political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany (Jan 90)
29 Political changes in East Germany and the flight of refugees to West Germany (Nov 89)
29 Attack and sexual assault on a female jogger in Central Park, New York, by a group of youths (May 89)
29 Failed coup attempt against Panamanian strongman Noriega (Oct 89)
28 The death of 87 people in a fire at a social club in the Bronx, New York (April 90)
28 Political changes taking place in the Soviet Union (March 90)
28 Arrest of Washington's Mayor Barry on drug use charges (Feb 90)
28 The revolution in Romania (Jan 90)
28 Political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany (Dec 89)
28 Problems at nuclear reactor plants (Oct 88)
28 The end of Gary Hart's candidacy and the Donna Rice allegations (Sept 87)
27 Deployment of U.S. marines to Liberia to protect the lives of Americans caught in the civil war (Aug 90)
27 Lithuania's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union and Moscow's response (May 90)
27 Acquittal of the owners of the McMartin Day Care Center in California who were charged with sexually abusing children (Feb 90)
27 The NFL playoffs (Jan 90)

PERCENT FOLLOWED VERY CLOSELY

27 The Republican convention (Aug 88)

26 THE BUSH/GORBACHEV SUMMIT MEETING IN HELSINKI (SEPT 90)

26 The death of Hank Gathers, a college basketball player, during a game (April 90)

26 Political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany (Feb 90)

26 Passage in Congress of a bill to bail out ailing savings and loan institutions (Aug 89)

25 Supreme Court's hearing of arguments in a Missouri abortion case (May 89)

24 Supreme Court decision that found laws against flag burning unconstitutional and the attempt in Congress to amend the Constitution (July 90)

24 Nelson Mandela's visit to the U.S. (July 90)

24 Deployment of the Hubble Space Telescope (May 90)

24 Difficulties the government is having in getting people to fill out Census forms (May 90)

24 The NCAA Basketball playoffs (April 90)

24 Supreme Court decision regarding a person's right to die (July 90)

23 Attempt in Idaho to pass a bill that would severely restrict abortions (April 90)

23 Greyhound bus drivers' strike (April 90)

23 Discussion of the reunification of Germany (March 90)

23 The World Series (Nov 89)

22 Washington Mayor Barry's trial (July 90)

22 The 54 year old Oregon woman suffering from Alzheimers who ended her life by using a suicide machine (July 90)

22 President Bush's visit to Colombia to attend a drug summit (March 90)

22 The Super Bowl (Feb 90)

22 Letter bombings of federal judges (Jan 90)

22 Discoveries made by the spacecraft Voyager 2 (Sept 89)

22 Trial of televangelist Jim Bakker (Sept 89)

22 April hijacking of a Kuwaiti airplane by Shiite Moslems (May 88)

22 Cease fire in the war between Iran and Iraq (Aug 88)

22 News about the presidential campaign in 1988 (May 88)

22 Charges that Pete Rose has bet on baseball games (July 89)

21 Controversy surrounding the way Roseanne Barr sang the National Anthem at a San Diego Padres baseball game (Aug 90)

21 Tensions between Moscow and the Baltic Republics of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania who wish to secede from the Soviet Union (June 90)

21 Discussions about German reunification (April 90)

21 Political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, East Germany and other countries of Eastern and Central Europe (March 90)

21 Scandal involving HUD (Aug 89)

20 THE MURDER ON A NEW YORK SUBWAY PLATFORM OF A UTAH MAN ATTEMPTING TO PROTECT HIS FAMILY FROM ATTACK BY TEENAGE MUGGERS (SEPT 90)

20 Earthquake in Iran (July 90)

20 Gorbachev/Bush summit (Dec 89)

20 Attempts by the U.S. government to depose General Noriega in Panama (May 88)

20 Post-season baseball playoffs (Oct 89)

PERCENT FOLLOWED
VERY CLOSELY

19 Attempts by Congress and the Administration to find ways to reduce the budget deficit (Aug 90)
19 Elections in Nicaragua (March 90)
19 Coup attempt against the Filipino government (Dec 89)
19 Attempts in Congress to repeal the new catastrophic health insurance plan (Oct 89)
19 Incidents of racial violence in New York City and Virginia Beach (Sept 89)
19 Discussions of a U.S. Soviet arms agreement (Sept 87)
18 Special meetings between the Bush Administration and Congressional Leaders to find ways to reduce the federal deficit (June 90)
18 Continuing news about the Savings and Loan scandal (June 90)
18 Reports about renewed inflation and rising interest rates (May 90)
18 Senator Moynihan's proposal to cut social security taxes (Feb 90)
18 The stock market crash (May 88)
18 Conflict in the Middle East between Palestinians and the Israelis in the occupied territories (May 88)
17 Racial tension in New York City resulting from the Bensonhurst trial verdict and the black boycott of Korean grocers (June 90)
17 Discussions between the American and Japanese governments about trade issues (April 90)
17 A custody case involving a mother who went to jail and a little child taken to New Zealand by her grandparents (March 90)
17 Nomination of Robert Bork to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court (Sept 87)
16 Nomination of David Souter to the U.S. Supreme Court to replace Justice William Brennan (Aug 90)
16 Washington DC Mayor Marion Barry's trial ending in a mistrial (Aug 90)
16 Financial troubles of Donald Trump (July 90)
16 Dispute between the President and Congress over allowing Chinese students to remain in America (Feb 90)
15 Controversy over the exclusion of blacks from membership in many country clubs at which national golf championship matches are played (Aug 90)
15 Education Summit held by Bush and the nation's Governors (Oct 89)
15 Ethics committee's investigation of Speaker of the House Jim Wright (May 89)
15 News about the Democratic candidates for the presidential nomination (Oct 87)
15 Conflict of interest allegations about Attorney General Ed Meese (May 88)
15 Scandal involving HUD (July 89)
14 Renewed fighting between government and the rebels in El Salvador (Dec 89)
14 House approval of a cut in the capital gains tax (Oct 89)
14 Spy scandal involving a U.S. Diplomat in Vienna (Aug 89)
14 Coverage of Democratic and Republican candidates for the Presidential nomination (Sept 87)
14 Pending divorce between Mike Tyson and Robin Givens (Oct 88)
13 WORSENING ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE SOVIET UNION (SEPT 90)
13 Civil unrest and ethnic violence in Soviet Azerbaijan (Feb 90)
13 Resumption of fighting in Nicaragua between the Contras and government forces (Nov 89)
13 Elections in Virginia, New Jersey, New York City and other localities (Nov 89)
13 News about the Republican candidates for the Presidential nomination (Oct 88)
12 Major League Baseball's decision to force George Steinbrenner to give up active control of the New York Yankees (Aug 90)

PERCENT FOLLOWED
VERY CLOSELY

12 Pledge of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress to end the armed struggle in South Africa (Aug 90)
12 Marital breakup of Donald and Ivana Trump (March 90)
12 Solidarity's role in governing Poland (July 89)
11 The incident in Gaza in which a deranged Israeli killed seven Palestinians and the West bank riots that followed (June 90)
11 Legalization of banned black opposition groups in South Africa and the promise to free Nelson Mandela (Feb 90)
10 Japanese purchase of Rockefeller center in New York City (Dec 89)
10 The spending and tax proposals made by Congressman Dan Rostenkowski to help reduce the budget deficit (April 90)
10 Academy Awards (April 90)
9 Aids conference in San Francisco (July 90)
9 May day protests in Moscow (May 90)
9 Bankruptcy of Drexel Burnham Lambert Inc. (March 90)
9 Trial of Hotel owner Leona Helmsley for tax evasion (Sept 89)
9 Stories about the 20th anniversary of the Woodstock Music Festival (Aug 89)
7 ***FIRST REPORTS FROM THE 1990 U.S. CENSUS (SEPT 90)***
6 Elections in Romania (June 90)
6 The visit to the United States of Vaclav Havel, the new president of Czechoslovakia (March 90)
6 Trip of high ranking officials to China (Jan 90)
6 Scandal involving the Japanese Prime Minister and other high ranking officials (May 89)
6 The scandal involving Congressman Barney Frank and a male prostitute (Oct 89)
4 Dismissal of Pakistan's Prime Minister Bhutto by Pakistan's President (Aug 90)
4 Civil war in Cambodia (May 90)
2 Tom Cruise's separation from his wife (April 90)

Times Mirror
Center for
The People &
The Press

NEWS

1875 Eye Street, N.W., Suite 1110
Washington, D.C. 20006
202 293-3126

FOR RELEASE: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1990

Times Mirror News Interest Index
October 1990

Public Interest and
Awareness of the News

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Donald S. Kellermann, Director
Andrew Kohut, Director of Surveys
Carol Bowman, Research Director
Times Mirror Center for The People & The Press
202/293-3126

GAS PRICES RIVAL GULF FOR PUBLIC ATTENTION

The focus of the American public's attention is shifting to the domestic consequences of the Gulf crisis.

Although Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and U.S. troop deployment to the Gulf continues to dominate the consciousness of Americans, news about rising gasoline prices drew nearly as much public interest in September. At the same time, attentiveness to the plight of hostages in the Gulf fell below levels recorded in previous surveys.

Sixty-three percent of the public reported they were following news about the crisis in the Gulf very closely, compared to the 62% who paid close attention to stories about rising gasoline prices. This represents a six percentage point increase in the number of Americans following news of the gas price hike (from 56% a month ago) and no change whatsoever in the proportion of the public following the principal story. In contrast, the percentage of the public paying close attention to hostage news declined from 57% a month ago to 47% currently.

Although the level of public interest in news about gasoline price hikes rivaled interest in the principal Gulf story, Americans continued to cite the Mideast crisis as the ***most important*** news of the month (68%) and told us that it was the single story they followed most closely (62%).

Despite the intensity of the battle over the budget in Washington, just 34% reported they were following news about attempts to resolve the budget impasse very closely. This is an appreciably higher level of attentiveness to this story than was recorded in July (19%) or May (18%). It should also be noted that while only a third of the public was highly attentive to the budget debate, large percentages of the public were able to volunteer the types of tax increases being considered -- 45% gasoline taxes, 38% cigarette taxes, 40% alcohol taxes.

The principal demographic correlate of interest in attempts to resolve the budget dispute is ***age***. Among people under 30 just 20% said they were following news about the debate very closely, while among people 50 & older attentiveness was more than twice as high (46%).

The survey finds that 55% of the public approves of the way President Bush is handling his job and 28% disapprove. In September, the President's approval rating stood at 68% and in August it was 76% in Times Mirror opinion surveys.

All demographic and political groups register increased dissatisfaction with the way the President is handling his duties, but Bush approval ratings have declined by 15 percentage points or more among older people (47% approve), blacks (32%), Democrats (40%) and in the East (49%).

Interest in the confirmation of Judge Souter remained at the low level recorded in previous surveys, despite extensive coverage of the confirmation hearings in September. Only 15% said they followed the story very closely compared to 16% in July. Furthermore, just 51% of the Times Mirror sample could correctly identify Souter on an unprompted basis. Among people under 30 years of age only 26% knew who Souter was, compared to 63% among those 50 years of age and older.

Americans took little notice of the reunification of Germany. Only 22% said they followed news about that historic event very closely. Interest was only slightly higher among older people (26%) who presumably have more of a personal connection to the event.

The upcoming elections have so far failed to capture the close attention of the American public. Nationwide, only 18% said they were following news about the candidates and the elections in their state very closely. Interest in the races is only marginally higher in those states that have closely contested Senate or Gubernatorial races. By our analysis, 60% of the national population lives in such states -- and in these states only 20% of the public report that they have been following news about the upcoming election campaign very closely.

As in previous Times Mirror surveys, the public gives a better than average rating to the quality of Gulf coverage, with 30% rating it as excellent. In contrast, 13% of those who said the budget battle was the story they were following most closely, rated that coverage as excellent. Gasoline price hike news received an even lower excellent rating -- and fully 57% rated coverage of this story as only fair or poor. The survey provides no indication of the specific complaints that the public has with the coverage of this story.

The Budget Crisis

The survey also found that 35% of the public favored the deficit reduction plan proposed by President Bush and the bipartisan leadership of Congress, while 41% opposed it.

There is a stunning age break in these numbers. Americans over 50 opposed the plan by a margin of 50-29 percent, while those under 30 favored it by 41-33. Middle-aged Americans divided about evenly, with 36 percent favoring and 37 percent opposing the deficit reduction package.

In addition, the survey found that the public now places slightly more confidence in the Democratic congressional leadership's ability to make wise decisions on reducing the federal deficit than in President Bush's judgment on this issue.

The Democrats were cited by 29 percent of the public, the president by 25 percent, and the congressional Republicans by 18 percent. Another 17 percent volunteered "none of the above," and 11 percent said they didn't know.

Part of the President's difficulties with the public are reflected in the views of grass-roots Republicans, who divide almost evenly between the GOP's congressional leadership and the President on the question of who will make wise decisions about reducing the budget deficit. Thirty-nine percent have more confidence in congressional Republicans; 36 percent place more trust in the President.

What Does The Public Know?

Forty-five percent of the public knew, on an unprompted basis, that gasoline taxes had been targeted for an increase as part of the bipartisan deficit reduction package, but only 11 percent volunteered "increased Medicare taxes" as part of the package.

Cigarette taxes were cited by 38 percent of respondents, taxes on alcoholic beverages by 40 percent. Five percent cited increased income taxes for wealthy Americans, and another 5 percent said income taxes generally.

One percent mentioned taxes on airplane tickets, 15 percent cited other taxes, and 33 percent said that without assistance they couldn't recall any specific tax provisions at all.

Fifty-eight percent of those surveyed said they had not seen President Bush's televised speech on the budget deficit, while 17 percent said they saw the entire address and 25 percent said they saw part of it.

Only 44 percent of respondents knew that the decision not to reduce the tax on capital gains was a defeat for President Bush. Twenty-seven percent said it was a victory for the president, and 29 percent said they didn't know.

The Public And The Rest of The News

Close to four in ten reported that they had heard a lot about the case of alleged sexual harassment of a female reporter by members of the New England Patriots. The gender breakdown on hearing a lot about the story was 50% men vs. 31% women.

One in five (21%) reported hearing a lot about the PBS Civil War documentary and the MPAA's dropping of the X rating in favor of a NC 17 rating had the same level of penetration (20% heard a lot about it). Fewer (16%) said they had heard a lot about the Mapplethorpe obscenity trial in Cincinnati. Awareness of the case was twice as great among college graduates (33%).

Only 4% reported hearing a lot about Khrushchev's memoirs.

PERCENT FOLLOWING EACH NEWS STORY "VERY CLOSELY"

	Iraq's Occupation of Kuwait	American Hostages and Westerners detained in Iraq and Kuwait	Budget Deficit	Senate Confirmation of Supreme Court Justice David Souter	N
Total	63	47	34	15	(1213)
Sex					
Male	66	51	39	17	(605)
Female	59	44	30	14	(608)
Race					
White	65	48	35	16	(1045)
Non-white*	49	40	28	12	(155)
Black	48	41	31	11	(88)
Age					
Under 30	59	43	20	6	(262)
30-49	64	45	31	11	(498)
50+	64	52	46	26	(438)
Education					
College graduate	74	52	41	23	(338)
Other college	66	48	36	16	(331)
High school grad.	61	44	30	12	(391)
Less than h.s. grad.	50	45	32	14	(144)
Region					
East	65	47	39	17	(297)
Midwest	60	44	32	14	(307)
South	61	50	32	12	(362)
West	65	47	34	20	(246)
Party ID					
Republican	71	51	33	19	(379)
Democrat	61	48	35	15	(381)
Independent	59	43	34	13	(374)

Question: Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely.

*Non-white include blacks

CONTINUED...

... CONTINUED

	Increases in the Price of Gasoline	Reunification of Germany	News About Candidates and Election Campaigns in Your State	United Nations Children's Summit held in New York
Total	62	22	18	6
Sex				
Male	64	26	18	5
Female	60	19	18	8
Race				
White	62	23	18	5
Non-white*	65	18	18	14
Black	68	22	21	13
Age				
Under 30	55	19	8	6
30-49	62	20	16	7
50+	67	26	27	6
Education				
College graduate	52	28	22	8
Other college	69	27	18	7
High school grad.	62	16	14	5
Less than h.s. grad.	64	19	21	7
Region				
East	61	26	16	7
Midwest	65	20	16	6
South	62	21	24	6
West	59	22	16	8
Party ID				
Republican	57	22	21	4
Democrat	69	24	23	10
Independent	63	21	12	6

Question: Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely.

*Non-white include blacks

PRESS COVERAGE RATINGS OF NEWS STORIES

STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY

	Iraq's Occupation of Kuwait	Budget Deficit	Increase in the Price of Gasoline
Excellent	30	13	5
Good	51	40	35
Only Fair	13	28	31
Poor	4	14	26
Don't know	2	5	3
	100	100	100

PRESS PERFORMANCE

	MAY 1989	JUL 1989	AUG 1989	SEP 1989	OCT 1989	NOV 1989
Excellent	19	26	25	19	32	41
Good	43	42	45	50	45	41
Only Fair	24	21	21	22	18	13
Poor	10	10	8	7	3	3
Don't Know	4	1	1	2	2	2
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

	DEC 1989	JAN 1990	FEB 1990	MAR 1990	APR 1990	MAY 1990
Excellent	22	33	23	26	23	28
Good	45	48	50	48	54	49
Only Fair	25	14	19	20	16	17
Poor	6	3	5	4	4	5
Don't Know	2	2	3	2	3	1
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

	JUNE 1990	JULY 1990	AUG 1990	SEPT 1990	OCT 1990
Excellent	25	21	30	33	24
Good	51	50	48	46	48
Only Fair	18	21	14	13	18
Poor	4	6	6	5	8
Don't Know	2	2	2	3	2
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Question: In general, how would you rate the job the press has done in covering (STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY IN Q.8); excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates among 1,213 adults, 18 years of age or older, during the period of October 4-7, 1990. Interviewing services were provided by The Gallup Organization in Lincoln, Nebraska. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is plus or minus 3 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

TIMES MIRROR NEWS INTEREST INDEX
OCTOBER 1990
October 4-7, 1990
n=1,213

Q.1 Do you happen to read any daily newspaper or newspapers regularly?

72	Yes
28	No
0	Don't know
100	

Q.2 Do you happen to watch any TV news programs regularly, or not?

81	Yes
19	No
0	Don't know
100	

Q.3 Do you listen to the news on the radio regularly or not?

54	Yes
46	No
0	Don't know
100	

Q.4 Do you approve or disapprove of the way George Bush is handling his job as President?

55	Approve
28	Disapprove
17	Don't know
100	

INTERVIEWER NOTE: PLEASE FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE RESPONSE CATEGORIES

Q.5 What do you think is the most important news event that happened in the nation or in the world in the past 4 weeks? (DO NOT READ)

<u>International Stories</u>	
Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. forces to the Persian Gulf/General mentions of the Gulf crisis	68
The plight of American hostages and other Westerners detained in Iraq and Kuwait	1
Political changes taking place in the Soviet Union	*
Political changes taking place in Eastern Europe	*
The reunification of Germany	5
Worsening economic conditions in the Soviet Union	*
<u>Domestic Stories</u>	
Attempts by Congress and the Administration to find ways to reduce the budget deficit	9
The Senate confirmation of Supreme Court Justice David Souter	*
Recent increases in the price of gasoline	1
News about the candidates and election campaigns	0
The United Nations Children's Summit held in New York	*
OTHER (SPECIFY)	3
DON'T KNOW/REFUSED	12
NONE	1
	100

NOW I WANT TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT A FEW PEOPLE IN THE NEWS - NOT EVERYONE WILL HAVE HEARD OF THESE PEOPLE

Q.6 Do you happen to know who David Souter (PRONUNCIATION: SUE-TER) is? (IF YES, WHO?)

57	Yes ---------->	(IF "YES" ASK:) Who? (DO NOT READ)	
42	No	51	Supreme Court Justice Nominee
1	Don't know	3	Incorrect answer
100		3	Don't know
		57	

Q.7 Now I will read a list of some stories covered by news organizations this past month. As I read each item, tell me if you happened to follow this news story very closely, fairly closely, not too closely, or not at all closely. (READ AND ROTATE LIST)

	Very Closely	Fairly Closely	Not Not too Closely	at all Closely	DK
a. Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. forces to the Persian Gulf	63	27	6	4	* = 100
b. The plight of American hostages and other Westerners detained in Iraq and Kuwait	47	37	11	5	* = 100
c. Attempts by Congress and the Administration to find ways to reduce the budget deficit	34	37	17	12	* = 100
d. The Senate confirmation of Supreme Court Justice David Souter	15	30	26	28	1 = 100
e. Recent increases in the price of gasoline	62	26	8	4	* = 100
f. The reunification of Germany	22	42	21	15	* = 100
g. News about the candidates and election campaigns in your state	18	32	28	22	* = 100
h. The United Nations Children's Summit held in New York	6	19	29	45	1 = 100

Q.8 Which one of the stories I just mentioned, have you followed most closely? **(DO NOT READ LIST. ACCEPT ONLY ONE RESPONSE.)**

		Story Followed Most Closely
a.	Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. forces to the Persian Gulf	62
b.	The plight of American hostages and other Westerners detained in Iraq and Kuwait	4
c.	Attempts by Congress and the Administration to find ways to reduce the budget deficit	7
d.	The Senate confirmation of Supreme Court Justice David Souter	3
e.	Recent increases in the price of gasoline	12
f.	The reunification of Germany	2
g.	News about the candidates and election campaigns in your state	2
h.	The United Nations Children's Summit held in New York	*
	CAN'T SAY	8
		100

Q.9 Of all the stories mentioned, which of them, if any, received too much coverage? **(DO NOT READ LIST, ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES, BE SURE TO PROMPT FOR "ANY OTHERS")**

		Received Too Much Coverage
a.	Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. forces to the Persian Gulf	16
b.	The plight of American hostages and other Westerners detained in Iraq and Kuwait	2
c.	Attempts by Congress and the Administration to find ways to reduce the budget deficit	3
d.	The Senate confirmation of Supreme Court Justice David Souter	8
e.	Recent increases in the price of gasoline	4
f.	The reunification of Germany	1
g.	News about the candidates and election campaigns in your state	4
h.	The United Nations Children's Summit held in New York	1
	None	46
	CAN'T SAY	19

IF RESPONDENT SAID '99' CAN'T SAY IN Q.8, SKIP TO Q.11

Q.10 In general, how would you rate the job the press has done in covering (STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY IN Q.8); excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

		STORY FOLLOWED MOST CLOSELY:		
		Iraq's Occupation of Kuwait	Budget Deficit	Increase in the Price of Gasoline
24	Excellent	30	13	5
48	Good	51	40	35
18	Only Fair	13	28	31
8	Poor	4	14	26
2	Don't know	2	5	3
100		100	100	100
	Sample Size	(769)	(95)	(126)

Q.11 Did you happen to see all or part of President Bush's televised speech Tuesday night dealing with the budget deficit or didn't you happen to see it?

17	Saw all
25	Saw part
58	No, did not see it
0	Don't know
100	

Q.12 From what you have heard or read, do you favor or oppose the passage of the plan proposed by the President and Congressional leaders to reduce the budget deficit?

35	Favor
41	Oppose
24	Don't know
100	

Q.13 Who do you have the most confidence in to make wise decisions about reducing the budget deficit? (READ CHOICES 1-3)

18 Republican leaders in congress

29 Democratic leaders in congress OR

25 President Bush

17 None (VOL.)

11 Don't know
100

Q.14 The budget compromise agreed to by Congressional leaders and the Administration calls for tax increases in a number of areas. Do you happen to recall what types of taxes that will be increased? (DO NOT READ. ACCEPT MULTIPLE RESPONSES.)

45 Gasoline taxes

38 Taxes on cigarettes

40 Taxes on alcohol

1 Taxes on plane tickets

5 Increased income taxes (NO MENTION OF WEALTHY OR UPPER INCOME)

5 Increased income taxes for wealthy Americans

11 Increased Medicare taxes

15 Other taxes

33 Can't recall

Q.15 As part of the budget deficit reduction negotiations it was decided that there will be no reduction of taxes on capital gains this year. To the best of your knowledge is this considered a victory or a defeat for President Bush?

27 Victory

44 Defeat

29 Can't say
100

NOW I WANT TO ASK YOU JUST A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT SOME THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN IN THE NEWS - NOT EVERYONE WILL HAVE HEARD OF THEM.

Q.16 As I read a list of names, places or events tell me if you have heard a lot about it, something about it or never heard of?

	Heard A Lot About	Heard Something About	Never Heard of	Don't Know
a. The PBS Civil War documentary	21	31	48	* = 100
b. The X rating for movies being replaced by the NC 17 rating	20	48	32	* = 100
c. New England Patriots alleged sexual harassment of a female reporter	40	32	28	* = 100
d. Former Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's memoirs	4	32	64	* = 100
e. The Mapplethorpe obscenity trial in Cincinnati Ohio	16	24	59	1 = 100

TIMES MIRROR DATABASE
PUBLIC ATTENTIVENESS TO MAJOR NEWS STORIES
(1986 - 1990)

PERCENT FOLLOWED
VERY CLOSELY

80 Explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger (July 86)

73 Destruction caused by the San Francisco earthquake (Nov 89)

69 Little girl in Texas who was rescued after falling into a well (Oct 87)
66 Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. forces to Saudi Arabia (Aug 90)
63 **IRAQ'S OCCUPATION OF KUWAIT AND THE DEPLOYMENT OF U.S. FORCES TO THE PERSIAN GULF (OCT 90)**
63 Iraq's occupation of Kuwait and the deployment of U.S. Forces to the Persian Gulf (Sept 90)
62 **RECENT INCREASES IN THE PRICE OF GASOLINE (OCT 90)**
60 Invasion of Panama (Jan 90)
60 Destruction caused by Hurricane Hugo (Oct 89)

58 U.S. air strikes against Libya (July 86)
57 The plight of the American hostages and other Westerners detained in Iraq (Sept 90)
57 Recent increase in the price of gasoline (Aug 90)
56 Recent increases in the price of gasoline (Sept 90)
53 Crash of a United Airlines DC-10 in Sioux City, Iowa (Aug 89)
52 Alaska Oil Spill (May 89)
51 Supreme Court decision of flag burning (July 89)
50 Opening of the Berlin Wall between East and West Germany (Nov 89)
50 Flight of the space shuttle (Oct 88)

49 Murder of Marine Lt. Col. Higgins in Lebanon, and negotiations to free the other hostages in the Mideast (Aug 89)
49 Drought and its effects on American farmers (Aug 88)
48 TWA hostage crisis that took place last summer in Beirut, Lebanon (July 86)
47 **THE PLIGHT OF AMERICAN HOSTAGES AND OTHER WESTERNERS DETAINED IN IRAQ AND KUWAIT (OCT 90)**
47 Political upheaval in China (July 89)
47 Supreme Court decision on abortion (July 89)
46 Nuclear accident at Chernobyl in the Soviet Union (July 86)
46 Freeing of two Americans who had been held hostage in the Mideast (May 90)
43 News about the presidential campaign in 1988 (Oct 88)
42 Hot weather this summer and the greenhouse effect (Aug 88)
42 Downing of an Iranian passenger plane by a U.S. Navy ship (Aug 88)
40 Bush administration's plan to deal with this country's drug problem (Sept 89)
40 The stock market crash (Oct 87)

PERCENT FOLLOWED
VERY CLOSELY

39 News about the presidential campaign in 1988 (Aug 88)
38 Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to the U.S. for a Summit meeting (June 90)
38 Drug use and efforts to combat it (Jan 90)
38 U.S. Navy escort of Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf (Sept 87)
37 U.S. Navy escort of Kuwaiti oil tankers in the Persian Gulf (Oct 87)
37 Stories about Dan Quayle, the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate (Aug 88)
37 Sentencing of Oliver North (July 89)
36 The murder of five people by a serial killer around the University of Florida campus in Gainesville (Sept 90)
35 Attempts to change the abortion laws (Dec 89)
35 Hijacking of the Achille Lauro cruise ship in the Mediterranean (July 86)
35 Explosion and fire on the U.S. Battleship Iowa (May 89)
34 ATTEMPTS BY CONGRESS AND THE ADMINISTRATION TO FIND WAYS TO REDUCE THE BUDGET DEFICIT (OCT 90)
34 Reports about flooding in Texas and other southwestern states (June 90)
34 The war between the Colombian government and the major drug traffickers (Sept 89)
33 Crash of the Colombian airliner near Kennedy airport in New York (Feb 90)
33 Congressional hearings about the Iran-Contra affair (Sept 87)
33 Guilty verdict in the trial of televangelist Jim Bakker (Oct 89)
31 Celebration of Earth Day (May 90)
31 The World Series (Oct 88)
31 Flight of East German refugees to West Germany (Oct 89)
31 Oliver North trial (May 89)
30 Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy (Aug 90)
30 Freeing of jailed black South African leader Nelson Mandela (March 90)
30 Banishment of Pete Rose from baseball for life (Sept 89)
30 The Democratic convention (Aug 88)
30 President Bush's call for higher taxes to help reduce the federal deficit (July 90)

29 Reports about the condition of the U.S. economy (Sept 90)
29 Reports about the fires in Southern California (July 90)
29 Lithuania's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union and Moscow's response (April 90)
29 Suicide in Boston of Charles Stuart who murdered his pregnant wife and blamed it on a black man (Feb 90)
29 Political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany (Jan 90)
29 Political changes in East Germany and the flight of refugees to West Germany (Nov 89)
29 Attack and sexual assault on a female jogger in Central Park, New York, by a group of youths (May 89)
29 Failed coup attempt against Panamanian strongman Noriega (Oct 89)
28 The death of 87 people in a fire at a social club in the Bronx, New York (April 90)
28 Political changes taking place in the Soviet Union (March 90)
28 Arrest of Washington's Mayor Barry on drug use charges (Feb 90)
28 The revolution in Romania (Jan 90)
28 Political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany (Dec 89)
28 Problems at nuclear reactor plants (Oct 88)
28 The end of Gary Hart's candidacy and the Donna Rice allegations (Sept 87)

PERCENT FOLLOWED
VERY CLOSELY

27 Deployment of U.S. marines to Liberia to protect the lives of Americans caught in the civil war (Aug 90)
27 Lithuania's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union and Moscow's response (May 90)
27 Acquittal of the owners of the McMartin Day Care Center in California who were charged with sexually abusing children (Feb 90)
27 The NFL playoffs (Jan 90)27The Republican convention (Aug 88)
26 Bush/Gorbachev summit meeting in Helsinki (Sept 90)
26 The death of Hank Gathers, a college basketball player, during a game (April 90)
26 Political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and East Germany (Feb 90)
26 Passage in Congress of a bill to bail out ailing savings and loan institutions (Aug 89)
25 Supreme Court's hearing of arguments in a Missouri abortion case (May 89)
24 Supreme Court decision that found laws against flag burning unconstitutional and the attempt in Congress to amend the Constitution (July 90)
24 Nelson Mandela's visit to the U.S. (July 90)
24 Deployment of the Hubble Space Telescope (May 90)
24 Difficulties the government is having in getting people to fill out Census forms (May 90)
24 The NCAA Basketball playoffs (April 90)
24 Supreme Court decision regarding a person's right to die (July 90)
23 Attempt in Idaho to pass a bill that would severely restrict abortions (April 90)
23 Greyhound bus drivers' strike (April 90)
23 Discussion of the reunification of Germany (March 90)
23 The World Series (Nov 89)
22 THE REUNIFICATION OF GERMANY (OCT 90)
22 Washington Mayor Barry's trial (July 90)
22 The 54 year old Oregon woman suffering from Alzheimers who ended her life by using a suicide machine (July 90)
22 President Bush's visit to Colombia to attend a drug summit (March 90)
22 The Super Bowl (Feb 90)
22 Letter bombings of federal judges (Jan 90)
22 Discoveries made by the spacecraft Voyager 2 (Sept 89)
22 Trial of televangelist Jim Bakker (Sept 89)
22 April hijacking of a Kuwaiti airplane by Shiite Moslems (May 88)
22 Cease fire in the war between Iran and Iraq (Aug 88)
22 News about the presidential campaign in 1988 (May 88)
22 Charges that Pete Rose has bet on baseball games (July 89)
21 Controversy surrounding the way Roseanne Barr sang the National Anthem at a San Diego Padres baseball game (Aug 90)
21 Tensions between Moscow and the Baltic Republics of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania who wish to secede from the Soviet Union (June 90)
21 Discussions about German reunification (April 90)
21 Political changes taking place in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, East Germany and other countries of Eastern and Central Europe (March 90)
21 Scandal involving HUD (Aug 89)

PERCENT FOLLOWED VERY CLOSELY

20 The murder on a New York subway platform of a Utah man attempting to protect his family from attack by teenage muggers (Sept 90)
20 Earthquake in Iran (July 90)
20 Gorbachev/Bush summit (Dec 89)
20 Attempts by the U.S. government to depose General Noriega in Panama (May 88)
20 Post-season baseball playoffs (Oct 89)

19 Attempts by Congress and the Administration to find ways to reduce the budget deficit (Aug 90)
19 Elections in Nicaragua (March 90)
19 Coup attempt against the Filipino government (Dec 89)
19 Attempts in Congress to repeal the new catastrophic health insurance plan (Oct 89)
19 Incidents of racial violence in New York City and Virginia Beach (Sept 89)
19 Discussions of a U.S. Soviet arms agreement (Sept 87)
18 NEWS ABOUT THE CANDIDATES AND ELECTION CAMPAIGNS IN YOUR STATE (OCT 90)
18 Special meetings between the Bush Administration and Congressional Leaders to find ways to reduce the federal deficit (June 90)
18 Continuing news about the Savings and Loan scandal (June 90)
18 Reports about renewed inflation and rising interest rates (May 90)
18 Senator Moynihan's proposal to cut social security taxes (Feb 90)
18 The stock market crash (May 88)
18 Conflict in the Middle East between Palestinians and the Israelis in the occupied territories (May 88)
17 Racial tension in New York City resulting from the Bensonhurst trial verdict and the black boycott of Korean grocers (June 90)
17 Discussions between the American and Japanese governments about trade issues (April 90)
17 A custody case involving a mother who went to jail and a little child taken to New Zealand by her grandparents (March 90)
17 Nomination of Robert Bork to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court (Sept 87)
16 Nomination of David Souter to the U.S. Supreme Court to replace Justice William Brennan (Aug 90)
16 Washington DC Mayor Marion Barry's trial ending in a mistrial (Aug 90)
16 Financial troubles of Donald Trump (July 90)
16 Dispute between the President and Congress over allowing Chinese students to remain in America (Feb 90)
15 THE SENATE CONFIRMATION OF SUPREME COURT JUSTICE DAVID SOUTER (OCT 90)
15 Controversy over the exclusion of blacks from membership in many country clubs at which national golf championship matches are played (Aug 90)
15 Education Summit held by Bush and the nation's Governors (Oct 89)
15 Ethics committee's investigation of Speaker of the House Jim Wright (May 89)
15 News about the Democratic candidates for the presidential nomination (Oct 87)
15 Conflict of interest allegations about Attorney General Ed Meese (May 88)
15 Scandal involving HUD (July 89)
14 Renewed fighting between government and the rebels in El Salvador (Dec 89)
14 House approval of a cut in the capital gains tax (Oct 89)
14 Spy scandal involving a U.S. Diplomat in Vienna (Aug 89)
14 Coverage of Democratic and Republican candidates for the Presidential nomination (Sept 87)
14 Pending divorce between Mike Tyson and Robin Givens (Oct 88)

PERCENT FOLLOWED
VERY CLOSELY

13 Worsening economic conditions in the Soviet Union (Sept 90)
13 Civil unrest and ethnic violence in Soviet Azerbaijan (Feb 90)
13 Resumption of fighting in Nicaragua between the Contras and government forces (Nov 89)
13 Elections in Virginia, New Jersey, New York City and other localities (Nov 89)
13 News about the Republican candidates for the Presidential nomination (Oct 88)
12 Major League Baseball's decision to force George Steinbrenner to give up active control of the New York Yankees (Aug 90)
12 Pledge of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress to end the armed struggle in South Africa (Aug 90)
12 Marital breakup of Donald and Ivana Trump (March 90)
12 Solidarity's role in governing Poland (July 89)
11 The incident in Gaza in which a deranged Israeli killed seven Palestinians and the West bank riots that followed (June 90)
11 Legalization of banned black opposition groups in South Africa and the promise to free Nelson Mandela (Feb 90)
10 Japanese purchase of Rockefeller center in New York City (Dec 89)
10 The spending and tax proposals made by Congressman Dan Rostenkowski to help reduce the budget deficit (April 90)
10 Academy Awards (April 90)

9 Aids conference in San Francisco (July 90)
9 May day protests in Moscow (May 90)
9 Bankruptcy of Drexel Burnham Lambert Inc. (March 90)
9 Trial of Hotel owner Leona Helmsley for tax evasion (Sept 89)
9 Stories about the 20th anniversary of the Woodstock Music Festival (Aug 89)
7 First reports from the 1990 U.S. census (Sept 90)
6 THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S SUMMIT HELD IN NEW YORK (OCT 90)
6 Elections in Romania (June 90)
6 The visit to the United States of Vaclav Havel, the new president of Czechoslovakia (March 90)
6 Trip of high ranking officials to China (Jan 90)
6 Scandal involving the Japanese Prime Minister and other high ranking officials (May 89)
6 The scandal involving Congressman Barney Frank and a male prostitute (Oct 89)
4 Dismissal of Pakistan's Prime Minister Bhutto by Pakistan's President (Aug 90)
4 Civil war in Cambodia (May 90)
2 Tom Cruise's separation from his wife (April 90)